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FREE PLANET



In the wake of a grueling revolutionary war, the planet Lutheria has declared itself the first completely free planet in human history.

Lutheria's liberty was won through the unification of multifarious factions, from the military and organized labor to middle-class technicians and small landowners. But faced with the harsh realities of building a new world, the tenuous Revolutionary Coalition has begun to splinter...

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Conventional wisdom holds that the Surroko have ever been a fractious, nomadic people, led by charismatic war chiefs, their raids on orchaleum extraction sites augured by ceaseless small-scale conflicts over pastoral rights.

YOU CAN'T KEEP INDULGING HIM.

IT'S *SERVILE*. IT'S TREASONOUS.

IT'S--

A PROBLEM THAT WILL SOLVE ITSELF, ETHNE.

In truth, the raids were precipitated by the Interplanetary Development Alliance's thirst for orchaleum and resulting encroachment upon grazing and foraging territories. Raiding was a last resort.

KEEN, I ADORE YOUR POETRY. I AM IN AWE OF YOUR PATIENCE.

YOUR CAREFUL, DELIBERATE MANNER.

ANYONE TAKEN IN BY DREST'S HOWLING ISN'T TRUE SURROKO.

AND IF YOU CONTINUE DOING NOTHING THERE WILL BE NO TRUE SURROKO LEFT.

AND WE'LL ALL SLAVE AWAY, BLEEDING OUR MOUNTAINS TO LINE ALLIANCE POCKETS.

Prior to the discovery of orchaleum, while Surroko summers were consumed by combat, winters were devoted to communal feasting alongside once and future rivals, with chieftains relinquishing their authority in favor of more egalitarian arrangements.

BUT SOMETIMES...

...WHAT I NEED...

...IS A BIG, VIOLENT BRUTE.

This seasonal mode of life was abandoned with the formation of the United Surroko, a confederation forged by the first All-Season War Chief. As was customary, he adopted a new surname, that of the group he was chosen to lead.

USING STATE POWER TO IMPINGE UPON AN INDIVIDUAL'S FREEDOM IS INDEFENSIBLE.

BUT BECAUSE OUR FREEDOMS ARE INTRICATELY CONNECTED, ONLY POSSIBLE THROUGH SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, STATE POWER MUST BE HARNESSSED TO PROTECT EVERYONE'S FREEDOM.

By some accounts, the Lutheran Revolution never truly ended, with communes declaring independence and separatist movements of all creeds making themselves known scarcely before the ink had dried upon the 525 armistice.

While these groups espoused distinct philosophical outlooks, they were typically significantly more aligned with the existing government than that from which they had so recently liberated themselves. Such was not the case for the landowner revolts.

The landowners' grievances typically centered on state economic directives for land usage and trade. In short, they wished a return to 'Aides economic liberalism, placing them at odds with the most foundational principles of the revolutionary core.

Despite Interplanetary Development Alliance claims to the contrary, its involvement in these revolts--typically in the form of advanced weaponry and Far Star operatives--is, today, rarely disputed even among the staunchest Alliance apologists.

IDA AND FAR STAR. UNIVERSAL POWER AND FUTURE SHOCK. THE ASSEMBLIES AND THE COUNCIL. LANDOWNER'S ASSOCIATION AND THE SO-CALLED "FREEDOM GUARD."

HELL, THROW THE OROURANS IN THERE TOO. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? THEY ALL TALK ABOUT LIBERTY WITH A GUN TO YOUR HEAD.

WHO'S PAYING THE MOST? THAT'S MY GREAT CAUSE!

I'LL TAKE VIOLENT FREEDOM OVER PEACE IN CHAINS.



COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY LANDOWNERS...ALLIANCE WEAPONRY...FAR STAR PERSONNEL...SURROKO SEPARATIST MOVEMENTS...



...INSURRECTIONARY COMMUNES...TRADE IMBALANCES...AGRICULTURAL SHORTFALLS...OROURAN ATTACKS...

OUR CURRENT TRAJECTORY IS NOT SUSTAINABLE!

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM A REVOLUTION OF TECHNICIANS? IF THEY WERE COMMITTED TO FREEDOM, THEY'D HAVE BACKED THE KOMBINAT.

ALL THEY CARE ABOUT IS THEIR FREEDOM. AND NOW, HAVING REPLACED ONE HIERARCHY WITH ANOTHER, THEY'RE TURNING ON EACH OTHER.



FREEDOM AIN'T GIVEN OR WON. IT'S SEIZED VIOLENTLY.



I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE REBELS' RIGHTS, THEIR FREEDOM, THEIR PHILOSOPHY. I CARE ABOUT LUTHERIA. ABOUT GRACCHON'S DREAM.

WE'RE SOLDIERS AND THIS IS THE ENTIRETY OF OUR DUTY: PROTECT LUTHERIA BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.

By 526, Lutheria's Civil Guard was no stranger to impulsive, negligently planned rebellions; the Spring Insurrection, however, proved something else entirely, necessitating that the Freedom Guard be mobilized in Liberation.

Beginning as a march of dissatisfied landowners, their caravan grew steadily as it approached the capital city, with the rebellion serving as a prism through which discontented citizens of all stripes saw their specific critiques of Lutherian life.

By the time it reached the People's Palace, the caravan was an intractable, amorphous group comprising dissidents from landowners and the disillusioned middle class to Surroko and former extraction workers willing to pick up a rifle for the right price.

With the council barricaded inside, Lutheria faced the first serious conflict between its lofty ideals and its continued existence. Though the Freedom Guard neutralized the rebellion swiftly, the impacts of that decisive victory would ripple outward in the coming years.

ALL THIS TALK OF FREEDOM BUT I DON'T SEE IT. WHAT ABOUT MY FREEDOM? TO USE MY LAND AS I SEE FIT. TO PROVIDE FOR MY FAMILY. TO GOVERN MYSELF.

WE OVERTHREW THE ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT FOR SOMETHING BETTER... WHY CAN'T WE DO IT AGAIN?

I'LL DIE PROUDLY AS A FREE MAN.

CONSENSUS IS ESSENTIAL. BUT WHAT IF IT'S IMPOSSIBLE?

WE CANNOT ALLOW SECESSIONS; OUR SINGLE PLANET WOULD BECOME MYRIAD. BUT WAGING WAR ON CIVILIANS? IS THIS WHAT WE FOUGHT FOR?

ALL THIS DESTRUCTION, ALL THIS DEATH. WHEN WE WON OUR FREEDOM, I THOUGHT IT WOULD END AND NOW...

...I KNOW IT MUST BE YOUR WILL, THE WORKINGS OF THE GRAND MACHINE BUT...

THERE ARE NO GOOD OPTIONS, ONLY THE CHOICES WE MUST MAKE.

CREATOR, HELP ME ACCEPT YOUR PLAN.



GLORIA, WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING.

IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME AND IT WON'T BE THE LAST. THEY HAVE MARTYRS NOW.

YOU KNOW THE RULES: WE NEED COUNCIL AUTHORIZATION TO MOBILIZE ON LUTHERIA.

CAN I GIVE YOU SOMETHING FOR THE PAIN?

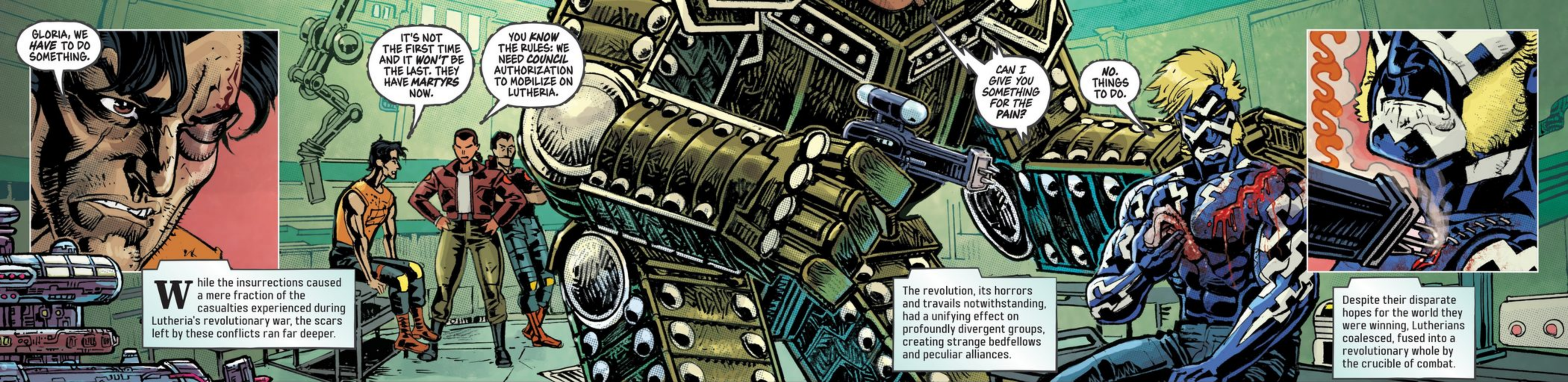
NO. THINGS TO DO.



Despite their disparate hopes for the world they were winning, Lutherians coalesced, fused into a revolutionary whole by the crucible of combat.

While the insurrections caused a mere fraction of the casualties experienced during Lutheria's revolutionary war, the scars left by these conflicts ran far deeper.

The revolution, its horrors and travails notwithstanding, had a unifying effect on profoundly divergent groups, creating strange bedfellows and peculiar alliances.



COME ON, GLORIA! YOU SAW THEIR WEAPONS.

THEY EVEN HAD FAR STAR THUGS WITH THEM! HOW MUCH MORE PROOF DO YOU NEED?

The insurrections, however, pitted Lutherians against, not Alliance soldiers, but their friends and neighbors, firing upon their former companions.



VICTOR, ARE YOU STUPID OR JUST DEFIANT? WE'RE PROHIBITED FROM CARRYING OUT MILITARY ACTIONS ON LUTHERIAN SOIL.

The repeated conflicts--and vituperative debates over the appropriate response--took a heavy toll, psychological and emotional, on the Lutherian populace.

THEN WE SHOULDN'T RETALIATE ON LUTHERIAN SOIL.

DUMUZID'S INFESTED WITH FAR STAR OUTPOSTS. YOU COULD START LIVING OUT YOUR REVOLUTIONARY IDEALS.

OF COURSE!

THE TERRORIST WANTS TO GET BACK TO HIS ROOTS: BLOWING UP CIVILIANS!

HE ALMOST GOT KEEN AND THE COGGERS KILLED! AND FOR WHAT? SOME BROKEN-DOWN MACHINERY?!

The desideratum of these disaffected factions--and the intended means of achieving them--were rarely in alignment, resulting in escalating contestation with not just the state but one another.

MING--!

SORRY, VICTOR.

I KNOW YOUR TYPE.

Enervated from a years-long struggle and increasingly hungry, formerly compliant components of the revolutionary coalition began to grow restive, impatient for the new world for which they had already paid so dearly.



Arrogant, terrified rich boy.
DESPERATE to be the hero,
to be the savior, to be **AUTHENTIC**.
But I see right through you.
Famous daddy. Good schools.

Big words. Cushy job.
But it ain't enough. it never is.
Because it's **COUNTERFEIT**.

It ain't yours.
You want to be real.
To be celebrated.
Boy, I've seen **PLENTY** of
you come my way.

Some joined up the other side.
Others joined the KOMBINAT;
stick it to **DADDY** or
the boss or both.

They talked tough but
it always went the same.

They lost their nerve.
They showed their hand.
They **BETRAYED**
themselves.

At the first sight
of their own

BLOOD.



BUT
YOU...

YOU
I CAN'T
FIGURE
OUT.





Try as I might, I can't figure why
you carry water for him.

I know the story:

The tribal moot. Blood brothers.
All that.

But you know the **TRUTH**:
He's using you.

Instead of Commander MacLiu's
boot on your neck, it's **HIS BOY**.
Spouting theory with a smile while
he steals your thunder.

YOUR talents.

YOUR brilliance.

BLOOD

spilled by

YOUR PEOPLE.

You think he respects you? Sees you as an equal?
BROTHER, you're smarter than that.



ENOUGH. YOU'RE
SOLDIERS. THIS
BEHAVIOR SHOULD
BE BENEATH
YOU.

SERVING ALONGSIDE
THAT **MURDERER** IS
BENEATH ALL OF US!
CAN'T YOU **SEE** WHAT
HE'S TRYING TO
DO?!

ALL I SEE IS **TEDIOUS**
BICKERING. SO, UNLESS
YOU'VE GOT YOUR OWN
LINE ON MUNITIONS
AND SALVAGE...

...WE'RE GOING TO
HAVE TO MAKE SOME
COMPROMISES WITH
YOUR MORAL CODE.





I REFUSE TO BE INVOLVED. IT'S SINFUL.

Like most religions that have undergone heavy institutionalization, Teomekhy boasted myriad proscriptions. However, the most fervent opprobrium was reserved for the nebulously defined "artificial intelligence."

HORA! TALUN IS OUR COMPANERE!

AND YOUR BISHOP AIN'T EVEN HERE TO PAT YOU ON THE HEAD.

BLASPHEMY MIGHT NOT MATTER TO YOU BUT I REMEMBER MY VOWS.

WILL YOU AT LEAST BRING ME THAT ANSIBLE FROM THE WRECK?



I CAN'T FIND IT.

MAYBE THIS ONE FORGOT TO LOAD IT.

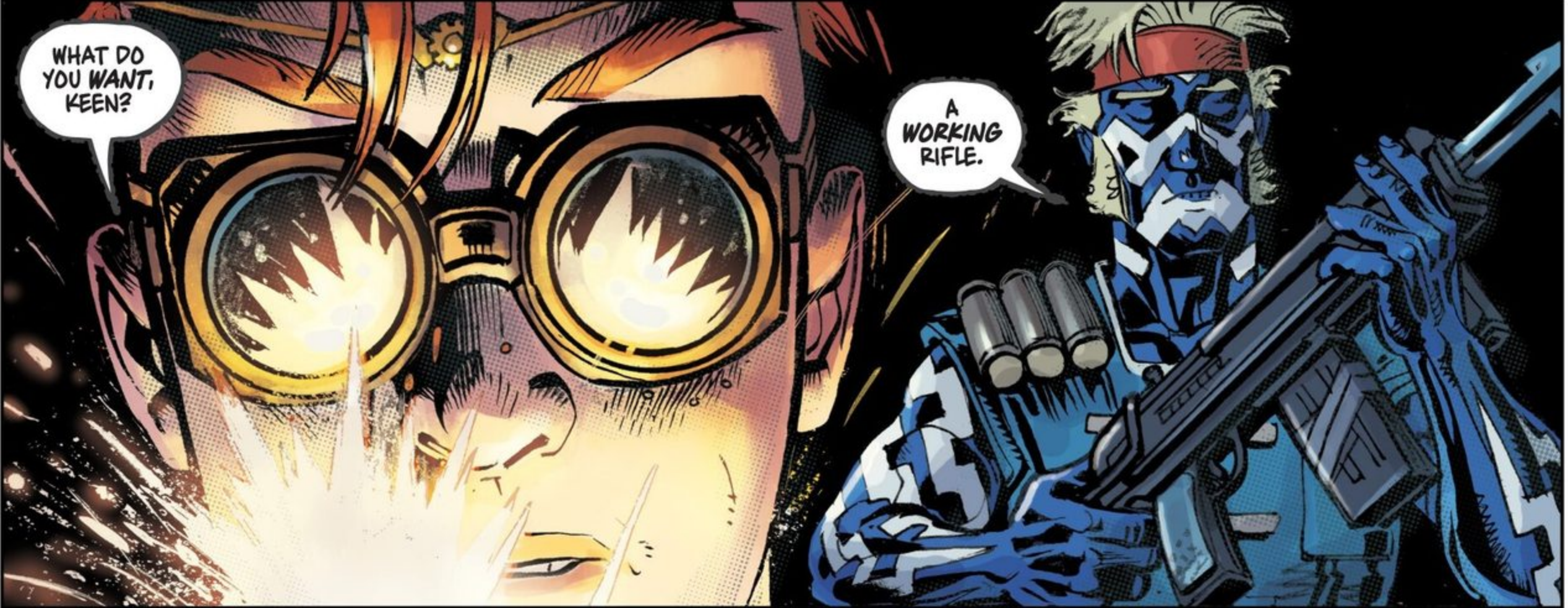
Though scholars of the Cataclysm have concluded there was no single cause but, rather, a multitude of contributing factors, the Teomekhean Church has always remained steadfast that it was AI that truly doomed Old Earth.



Further, the Church added a moral precept to its stance on AI, claiming that the possession of intelligence was the and exclusive purview of humankind and the creation of same that of the Creator.

ALLIANCE TECH'S SO FUSSY.

NO OFFENSE, TALUN.



WHAT DO YOU WANT, KEEN?

A WORKING RIFLE.

Teomekhean codes of behavior were even more severe for Machinists, who were expected to give up family, ambition, and belongings, dedicating themselves to the maintenance of the Grand Machine.



WHAT'S *THAT* SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

SAME AS LAST TIME.

THAT YOU'RE BORED AND LONELY? THAT YOU'RE OBSESSED WITH ME?

MY RIFLE. SIGHTS AIN'T ALIGNED.

MAYBE BECAUSE YOU USE IT AS A CLUB...

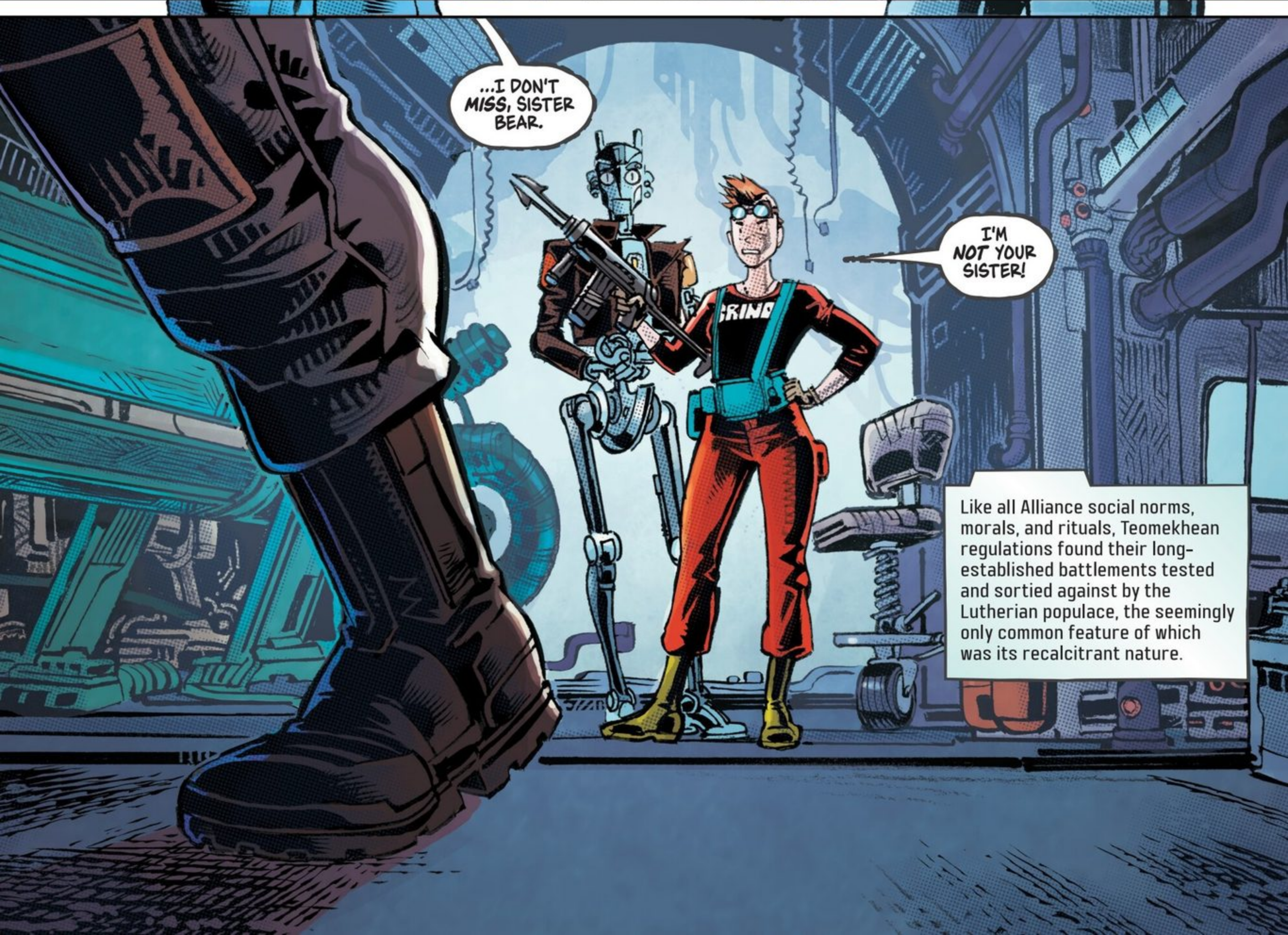
...LIKE A BIG, VIOLENT BRUTE.

OR CAN YOU JUST NOT SHOOT STRAIGHT?

NO...



A Machinist became tenant and custodian of their temple, shaved their head in the tonsure, maintained constant contact with their phylactery, and swore a vow of celibacy.



...I DON'T MISS, SISTER BEAR.

I'M NOT YOUR SISTER!

Like all Alliance social norms, morals, and rituals, Teomekhean regulations found their long-established battlements tested and sortied against by the Lutheran populace, the seemingly only common feature of which was its recalcitrant nature.



KATJA!
THE DEXTERITY
DRILLS ARE
WORKING!

I USED
THE MANUAL
GRAFTER
WITHOUT--

Even after the Revolution, sales of refined orchaleum to Alliance corporations comprised Lutheria's only meaningful exportation activity.

BASIL!
HAVE YOU LOST
YOUR MIND?!
STOMPING AND
SHOOTING IN
HERE?!

DO
YOU REALIZE
HOW DANGEROUS
IRRADIATED
ORCHALEUM IS?

REALIZE?!



WHO
DO YOU
THINK YOU'RE
TALKING
TO?!

With no other resources or existing industry, finding additional uses for orchaleum was a priority.

Early hopes of using orchaleum as a pesticide or fertilizer were quickly dashed, with scientists turning their focus to the creation of synthetic materials. Even when successful, however, they remained cost-prohibitive compared to Alliance-made alternatives.

BASIL,
BABY, I'M
SORRY, I--

ALL IT
TOOK FROM US
AND YOU'RE
STILL PLAYING
WITH FIRE.

In short order, Luthieran researchers concluded that the most promising non-fuel avenue for orchaleum research was, ironically, that which had previously been the Alliance's priority: Weapons of mass destruction.

HOW MUCH
ARE YOU GOING
TO SACRIFICE IN
PURSUIT OF
MORE EFFICIENT
DEATH?

I ALREADY
CAN'T TOUCH
YOU. I...

I CAN'T
LOSE YOU
COMPLETELY.





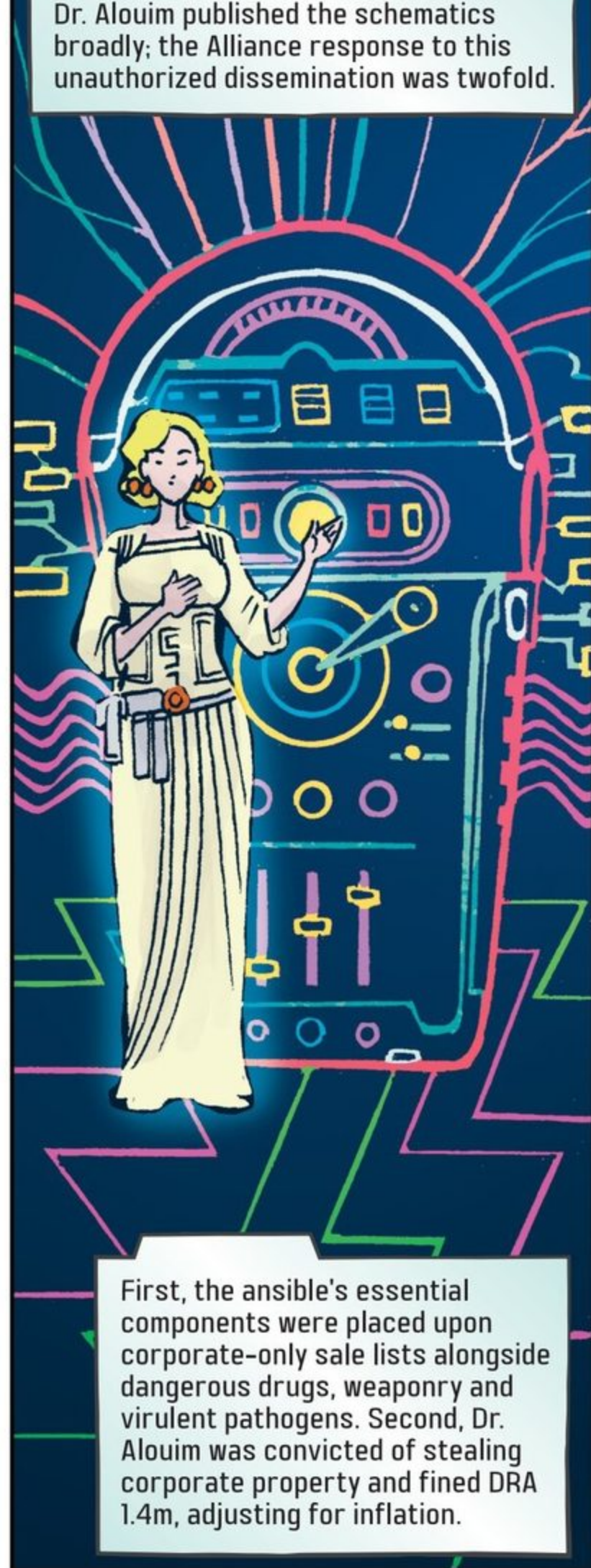
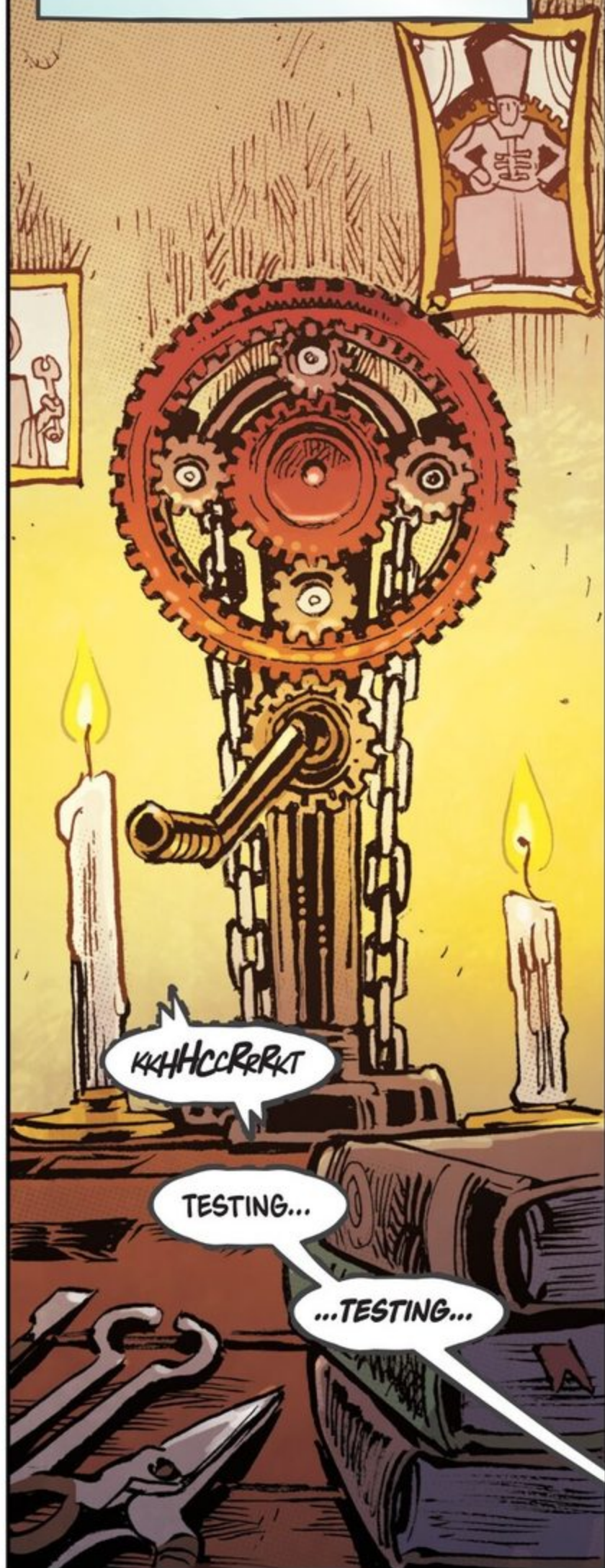
Few artifacts of Surroko life capture the imagination of the greater Terran population like the kuttuks. Even more so those of traditional manufacture, with blades bound to the curling horns of the Lutheran caprin.

In addition to the standard uses of a pair of blades, when wielded properly by an adroit practitioner (i.e., held with opposite grips) the kuttuks' distinctive hooks can parry, hook, block, disarm, and, if necessary, even rend and tear.

Though interstellar travel allowed humanity to spread out among the stars, it was interstellar communication, in the form of the ansible, that empowered the Interplanetary Development Alliance to do the same.

Invented by Dr. Ursula Alouim in 034, while in the employ of the corporate predecessor to Augnostica, the ansible permitted humanity, for the first time, to communicate instantaneously between star systems.

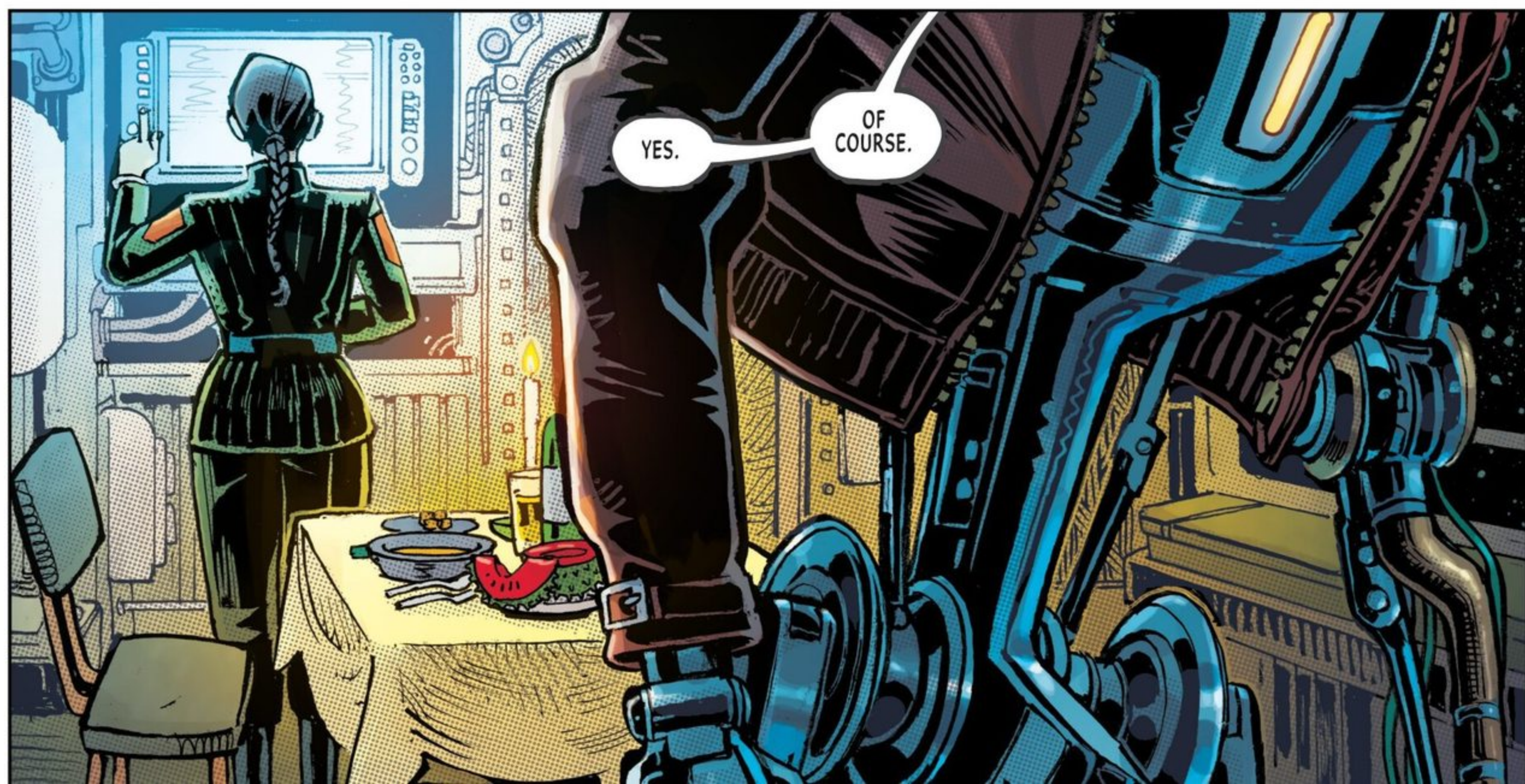
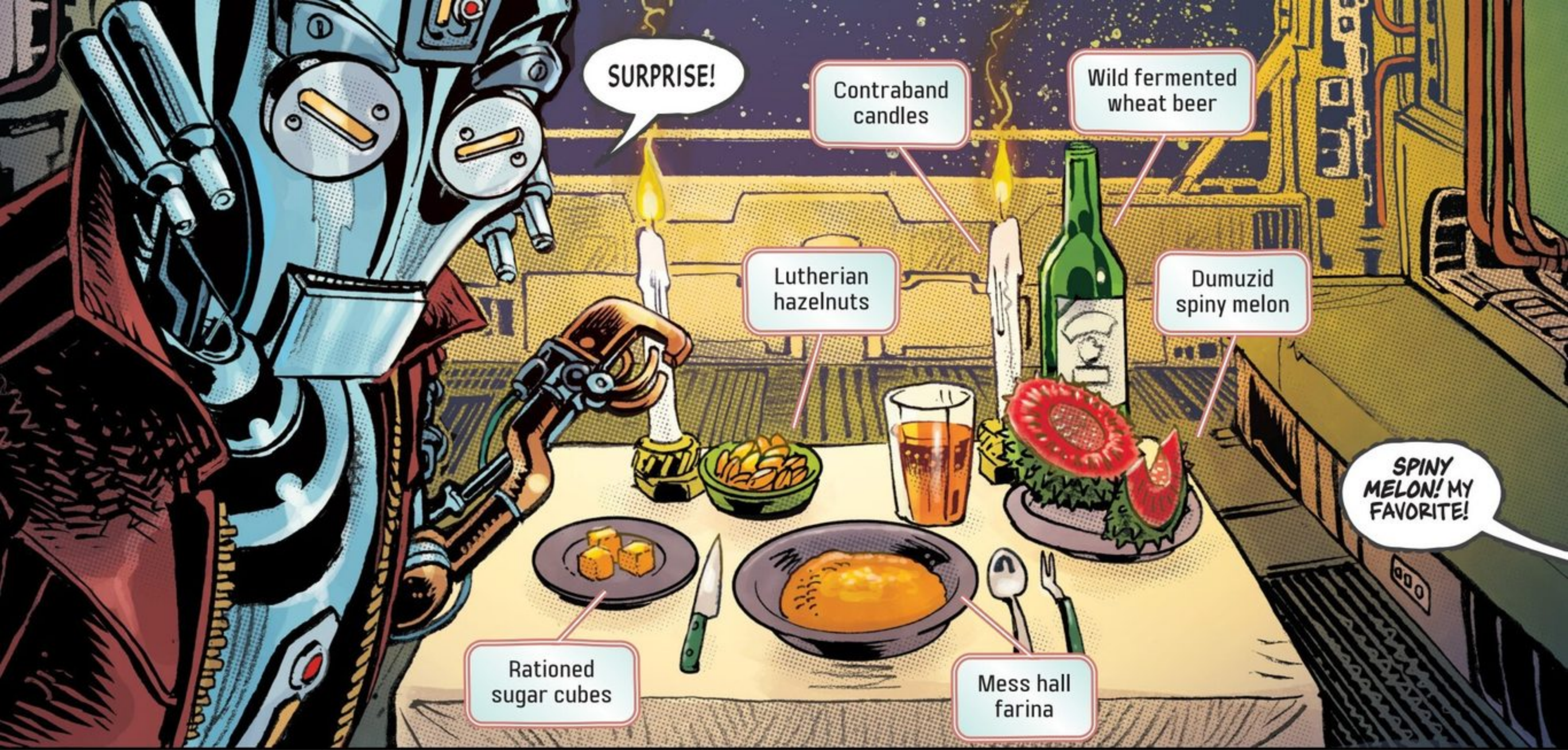
Recognizing her invention's critical importance to human development, Dr. Alouim published the schematics broadly; the Alliance response to this unauthorized dissemination was twofold.



First, the ansible's essential components were placed upon corporate-only sale lists alongside dangerous drugs, weaponry and virulent pathogens. Second, Dr. Alouim was convicted of stealing corporate property and fined DRA 1.4m, adjusting for inflation.



Blacklisted by every conglomerate and potential employer--despite having altered the course of humanity prior to her 30th birthday--Dr. Ursula Alouim took her own life in 037.



GOOD EVENING,
COMMANDER.

FERGAL.

IS THIS THE
AUTHORIZATION
I REQUESTED?

THE GRACCHON
MATTER REMAINS
UNDER THE PURVIEW
OF THE CIVIL
GUARD.

FUNNY
HOW MALLEABLE
PURVIEWS BECOME
WHEN THE COUNCIL
IS UNDER SIEGE.

AN ARMED
REVOLT IS DECIDEDLY A
MILITARY MATTER. THE
DISAPPEARANCE OF
A CITIZEN--

I'M SORRY,
DID I INTERRUPT
YOUR DINNER?

YOU'RE
TALKING ABOUT
THE ABDUCTION
OF LUTHERIA'S
FOUNDING
FATHER.

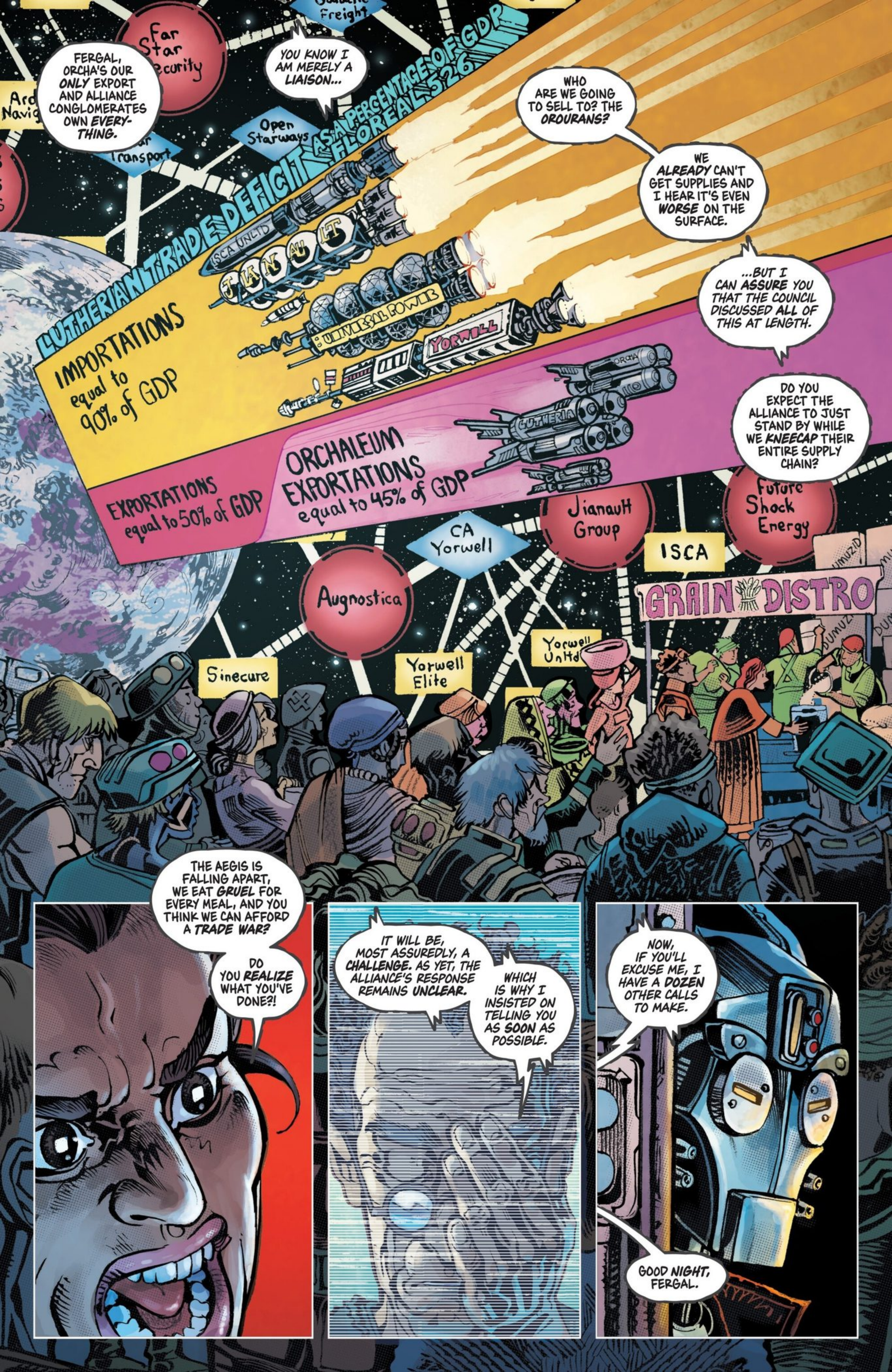


YOU KNOW
THE ALLIANCE
WAS BEHIND IT.
WE HAVE TO DO
SOMETHING.

THEN
PERHAPS
YOU'LL BE
PLEASED I
CALLED.

IN RESPONSE TO
TODAY'S ALLIANCE-
BACKED COUP ATTEMPT,
THE COUNCIL HAS VOTED
TO BAN ORCHALEUM SALES
TO ALLIANCE-FLAGGED
CARRIERS.

YOU
CAN'T BE
SERIOUS.



FERGAL, ORCHA'S OUR ONLY EXPORT AND ALLIANCE CONGLOMERATES OWN EVERYTHING.

Far Star Security

YOU KNOW I AM MERELY A LIAISON...

WHO ARE WE GOING TO SELL TO? THE OROURANS?

WE ALREADY CAN'T GET SUPPLIES AND I HEAR IT'S EVEN WORSE ON THE SURFACE.

...BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE COUNCIL DISCUSSED ALL OF THIS AT LENGTH.

DO YOU EXPECT THE ALLIANCE TO JUST STAND BY WHILE WE KNEECAP THEIR ENTIRE SUPPLY CHAIN?

LUTHERIAN TRADE DEFICIT
IMPORTATIONS equal to 90% of GDP

EXPORTATIONS equal to 50% of GDP

ORCHALEUM EXPORTATIONS equal to 45% of GDP

Augnostica

CA Yorwell

Jianauth Group

ISCA

Future Shock Energy

Sinecure

Yorwell Elite

Yorwell United

GRAIN DISTRO

THE AEGIS IS FALLING APART, WE EAT GRUEL FOR EVERY MEAL, AND YOU THINK WE CAN AFFORD A TRADE WAR?

DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'VE DONE?!

IT WILL BE, MOST ASSUREDLY, A CHALLENGE. AS YET, THE ALLIANCE'S RESPONSE REMAINS UNCLEAR.

WHICH IS WHY I INSISTED ON TELLING YOU AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I HAVE A DOZEN OTHER CALLS TO MAKE.

GOOD NIGHT, FERGAL.



GLORIA...



...WHEN WE ARE TOGETHER...

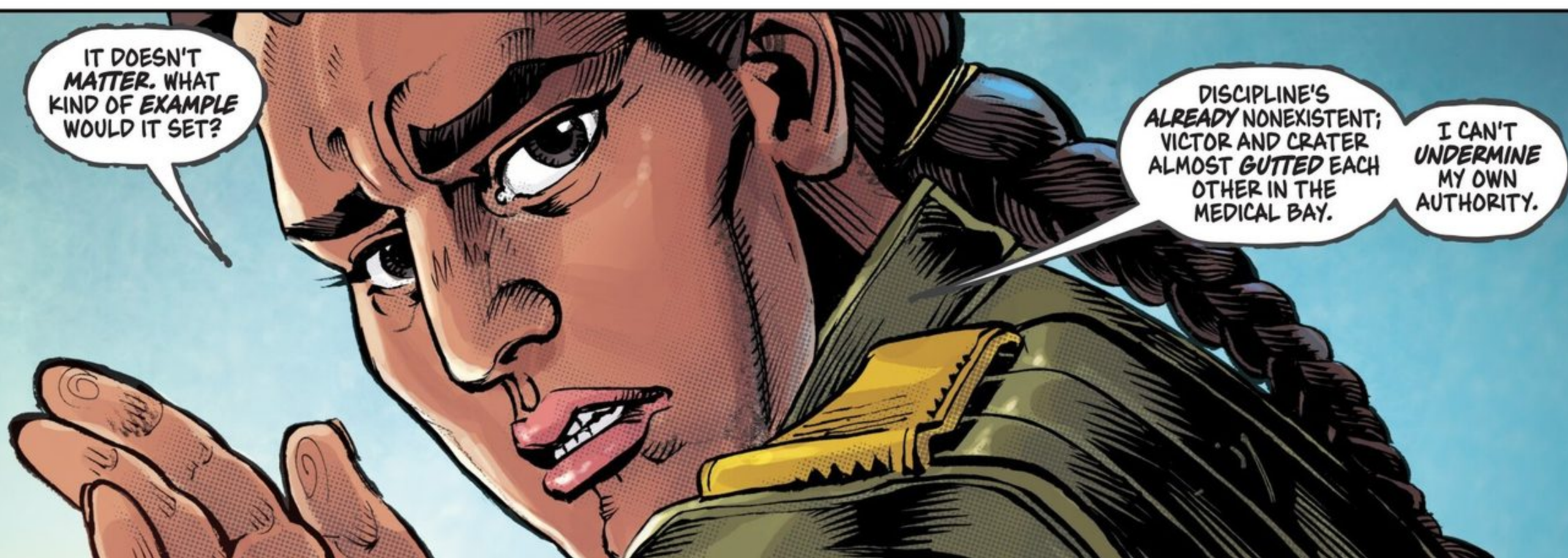
DO WE HAVE TO DO THIS NOW, TALUN?

...WHY MUST WE ACT LIKE WE ARE NOT?



WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS: I CAN'T BE SEEN BEING... INVOLVED WITH A SUBORDINATE.

BUT THE REVOLUTION DISMANTLED ALL HIERARCHICAL--



IT DOESN'T MATTER. WHAT KIND OF EXAMPLE WOULD IT SET?

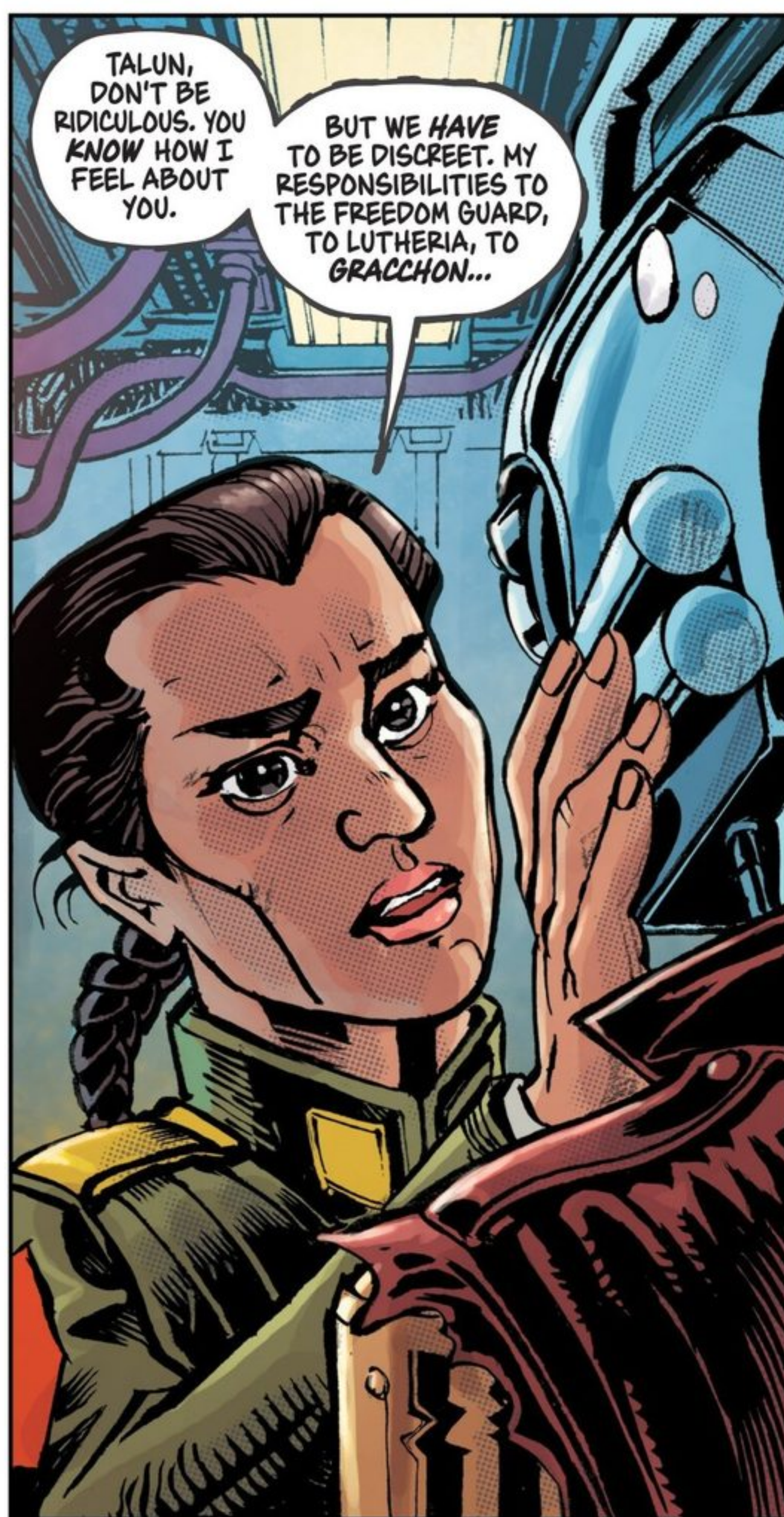
DISCIPLINE'S ALREADY NONEXISTENT; VICTOR AND CRATER ALMOST GUTTED EACH OTHER IN THE MEDICAL BAY.

I CAN'T UNDERMINE MY OWN AUTHORITY.



ARE YOU... ASHAMED OF ME?

OF US?



TALUN, DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT YOU.

BUT WE HAVE TO BE DISCREET. MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE FREEDOM GUARD, TO LUTHERIA, TO GRACCHON...



...THEY HAVE TO COME FIRST.

YES. OF COURSE.

To be continued.

THE INTERPLANETARY DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE: AN APOLOGIA

BY DR. ALDOUS FOYROUSHI

When detailing the history of Lutheria, there is an omnipresent risk: Depicting the Interplanetary Development Alliance solely as a profit-motivated corporatocracy, faceless and rapacious. To be sure, this description is not technically inaccurate; it is, however, too reductive for any serious, scientific view of history. Thus, we are compelled to grapple with the full complexity of the Alliance's motivations and the multitudinous and varied impacts thereof. Upon doing so, any serious, scientific student will soon recognize the truth: Just as Lutheria and the Orouran Empire held heroic opinions of their places in the universe, so too did the Alliance view itself as an ultimately benevolent hegemony.

The Alliance's chief benefit sits within its original *raison d'être*: The migration of those least able to afford the severely overpopulated charter worlds. At the time of the Alliance's founding, the prospects for all but its richest inhabitants were exceedingly bleak; the best most could hope for was a bunk in their employer's dormitories. As could be expected, this dramatic, universal overcrowding brought with it the standard suite of societal ills, namely crime, disease, and malnutrition. So wretched was their existence that Alliance colonists would further indenture themselves – typically to their existing employers – to be shipped across the galaxy for work both difficult and dangerous.

Viewed in terms of overall, average Alliance health, colonization was a panacea, a direct solution for its excess population as well as its follow-on impacts. Health improved across all conceivable metrics, from life expectancy and infant mortality to average height and weight, even extending to bodily levels of microplastics, carcinogens, radiation, wave damage, and assorted contaminants.

Though there exists a question of direct causality with regard to

these indicators, it is due to the presence of another major, direct benefit of Alliance colonization: The generation of monumental wealth. It would require a decidedly blinkered view not to immediately acknowledge that this newfound font of prosperity flowed primarily into the coffers of well-established Alliance corporations. However, it would be similarly disingenuous to ignore the very real and dramatic rise



Augnostica boasted some of the Alliance's most desirable employee dormitories, renowned for their relatively spacious bunks. As elsewhere, however, beds were only guaranteed for the duration of employment.

in wages across all levels and sectors – on newly rediscovered planets as well as charter worlds – that accompanied colonization.

To avoid disingenuous behavior on our own part, it should be noted that the metrics described above apply only to Alliance-born citizens; to extend the statistics further, without accounting for wildly divergent contexts vis-à-vis indigenous populations, would result in a myriad of crass generalizations. This is due, of course, to colonists' shameful, inhuman behavior on countless worlds, especially in the time before ratification of the IDA Guiding Principles on Dispersion Populations. The horror of these often inarguably genocidal actions cannot be overstated, mitigated or compensated for in any way.

For worlds that escaped the more open forms of brutality, however, the Alliance's mere presence brought a panoply of benefits, even preceding full membership. Whether these benefits outweigh the

harm resulting from more insidious forms of Alliance barbarity is a question of specific context and personal discernment. However, without making a value judgment, equivocating, or justifying crimes against humanity, it can be objectively stated that the Alliance improved the lives of billions of indigenous inhabitants through the provision of medical supplies and knowledge alone, not to mention the increased availability of Alliance foodstuffs and manufactured goods.

Unfortunately, for much of the Alliance's existence, the full benefits presented by an interplanetary supply chain remained unrealized due to the exorbitant costs associated with fifth-dimensional travel. As a result, colonists frequently found themselves isolated, cut off from further corporate investment and supplies upon the realization that the value of any colonial exports would not leave sufficient profit after transportation costs. Even after the invention of the ansible, colonial isolation rarely improved due to the device's enforced



Teomekhean missionaries embodied the contradictions of the Alliance, manufacturing consent for its hegemony while making monumental strides in the eradication of hunger and disease on numerous worlds.

scarcity and resulting exorbitant cost. This situation changed dramatically and suddenly with the discovery of orchaleum.

Once refined, the bright pink liquid coursing beneath the surface of the previously disregarded 'Aides could be used as a fuel possessing unparalleled potency. As a result, the raw per-lightyear costs of interstellar travel dropped precipitously, creating the potential for profit on the transportation of a variety of cargo. This newly fluid exchange typically consisted of shipping much-needed raw materials from the colonies in exchange for manufactured goods. Unsurprisingly, colonial raw materials were procured with and for the benefit of Alliance private investment.

The Alliance, through a complex web of corporate incentives and subsidies, conspired to keep the price of orchaleum artificially low, thereby making profitable the expanded distribution of heavier goods, such as food from ascendant agricultural powerhouse Dumuzid. Though the policy deprived then-'Aides of significant wealth, it also resulted in reduced instances of malnutrition across the Alliance's entire footprint. Additionally, less expensive travel made possible famine relief trips as well as the transportation of medicine to plague-ridden worlds and peacekeeping delegations to those torn asunder by civil war. Significantly, the Teomekhean Church was also able to more freely provide developing worlds with its greatest gift: The celebrated Kirkardi Engine.

The full implementation of the Alliance's plans for an interplanetary supply chain created wealth on a universal scale. While these obscene profits continued to trend upward in their distribution, as elucidated above, the advent of broader interstellar trade was the proverbial high tide, even though some ships were raised criminally more than others.

Taken in the preceding context, and in consideration of resulting orchaleum shortages, it should come as no surprise how the Alliance viewed the Lutheran revolution: As a direct assault upon humanity's galactic welfare. Fed by a steady supply of heavily

subsidized and tariff-free orchaleum, new distribution networks and economies had lifted entire planets out of hunger, disease, and poverty. But with wartime reductions in orchaleum extraction and 'Aides exportations, the Alliance was confronted with the salient risk of losing these benefits just as suddenly as they had been realized. As a result, the Alliance viewed maintaining control of orchaleum specifically and 'Aides more broadly as not just a strategic objective but a moral imperative.

Of course, as has been extensively documented elsewhere, the Alliance did, eventually, come to terms with a newly independent Lutheria. This seeming abandonment of the Alliance's moral imperative came as a direct result of the quickly intensifying threat of the Orouan Empire and its increasingly audacious and frequent raids on Alliance colonies.

Concurrent with forcing the Alliance to pivot away from its military defense of its supply chain, the Orouan expansion, ironically, also heightened the necessity of controlling orchaleum supply. Already, through the use of the Orouan Warp, the Empire could deploy its shock troops and raiding parties while avoiding risk to the larger fleet. However, the distance limitations of the Orouan Warp constrained the Empire's incursions to only the most rustic and undeveloped worlds, skirting the edges of Alliance-controlled territory.

With Lutheran independence, Alliance strategists' primary fear went from losing access to orchaleum to the Orouan Empire gaining it. With orchaleum to fuel their war engines, the Orouan Empire would find itself empowered to penetrate deep into Alliance space, even potentially reaching the charter worlds, endangering the lives of billions. Thus, the Alliance commitment to regaining control of the orchaleum trade remained profound, as it was deemed essential to halting Imperial expansion and maintaining the intergalactic hegemony that, despite its abundant downsides and transgressions, held the bulk of the known universe in peace, safety, and satiety.

SUBMIT QUESTIONS
regarding Lutheran history to
DrAldousFoyroushi@AtlantisStillSunk.com

QUESTIONS AND

WITH DR. ALDOUS FOYROUSHI

Many of my peers cautioned me against pursuing the FREE PLANET project. Their position entailed significant skepticism regarding a 2025 readership's willingness and even ability to engage with such a dense, nigh-overwhelming presentation of visual information. I am happy to report that, in the wake of our issue #3 letters page and the numerous thoughtful, engaging questions contained therein, my faithless, pessimistic colleagues have been subsisting on a diet consisting exclusively of crow.

In a way, this feature is the true end goal of the FREE PLANET project. As committed as we all are to relaying the truth of humanity's first completely free planet, as proud as we are of each member of the creative team's contributions, the production of a compelling, challenging and complex comic is merely a means to an end. That end is – of course – the prompting of thought, rumination and, crucially, discussion, which we are proud to continue here with a collection of brand-new questions from insightful, engaged readers just like you.

If you find yourself with burning questions or observations and musings you'd like to share, please do not hesitate to submit them to **DrAldousFoyroushi@AtlantisStillSunk.com**.

Without further ado...

Dear Dr. Foyroushi,

Examples of military and economic power by the Alliance are abundant and clear but how is soft power implemented (via entertainment production and consumption, sports, competitions, social media) over Lutheria? And vice versa?

As always, awaiting your insight,

Yours sincerely,

Bosco from Free Nueva Madrid

A truly superior question, Bosco, one that indicates a profound and insightful awareness not only of Lutheran realities but of your own

contemporary context. And you are correct, of course: While the most blunt and forceful tactics, the flexing of military and economic might are far from the only way through which hegemonic systems maintain their dominance.

Outside the notable exception of the Teomekhean religion, however, the dissemination of Interplanetary Development Alliance culture was constrained by a major, largely intractable factor: Distance. While travel between star systems had been possible for humanity since the Dispersion, it remained exceedingly rare due to its dramatic expense; even the glacially slow-moving arks of Old Earth must have represented a monstrous burden upon the planet's dwindling resources. As a result, the ferrying of cultural artifacts across the stars was typically deprioritized in favor of more militarily and economically essential cargo.

While the invention of the ansible enabled the instant transmission of auditory and – with the proper equipment – visual data, there remained significant, unnavigable hurdles to its broad usage for cultural pursuits: The Alliance's proscriptions on sales of the device's essential components and the resultingly exorbitant prices for working ansibles.

Which is not to say that there was never any crosscultural exchange between the Alliance charter worlds and remote outposts such as Lutheria/'Aides. However, even the material that successfully made the journey – primarily inexpensively printed books and pamphlets – typically struggled to find a meaningful audience due to the drastically divergent tastes and preferences of a human race spread across untold distances and millennia.

Dr. Aldous Foyroushi,

I am left wondering about the children of Lutheria. Or, perhaps more importantly, the children yet to be born and what will be done to encourage and help Lutherians to raise children. If a revolution is to be successful it must eventually be inherited and so it is time to get busy.

CLARIFICATIONS

We have seen birth rates explode after major global conflicts, as economic growth and optimism about the future returns the population. Besides the simple joys of family that some people choose, a free nation – a whole planet itself – must have an interest in seeing a flourishing, and growing, populace. For its citizenry is also its military and economic might through which it can resist absorption by the Orouran Empire.

Given the hardbodies we see on the Freedom Guard, with even the robots getting action, some little Lutherians can't be far behind.

Matt Bors

Thank you for this, Matt. In addressing a topic of such enormity as "Lutherian History," it can be difficult to balance an overarching exploration of major events with the examination of no-less-important but more quotidian cultural aspects. As such, I am overjoyed to have an opportunity to discuss Lutheria's smallest citizens.

Putting aside the Surroko and other indigenous groups, children upon Lutheria were relatively rare due to a confluence of factors, including, but not limited to: Alliance corporations rarely agreeing to transport humans below working age; the predominance of men among extraction workers; and the lower birth rates among educated, technician-level employees. In the wake of independence, these were joined by the general hardships and privation faced by the planet.

The children that did exist on Lutheria following independence were educated – as on most Alliance member planets – by a patchwork of parochial schools funded and staffed by the Teomekhean Church. Unsurprisingly, this proved an issue most contentious in regional assemblies across the planet.

Dr. Foyroushi,

I read with great interest your essay regarding the history and economics of Dumuzid. As a (hopeful) candidate for the Interplanetary Development Alliance exo-ecology cadre, I have a keen interest in ag-optimization terraforming in both

theory and practice and hope to continue to study the example of Dumuzid.

I am troubled by a thought regarding 'Aides, however. The inherent limitations of the planet with regard to ag-optimization are well known and have been a matter of some urgency and distress to the incipient "Lutherian" governing council. It is well known that humanity never travels alone, that every ark ship was not just a "human" ship, but a symbiotic ecology of microbes, plants, and some animals necessary to support human life or simply adept at stowing away.

The troubling thought regards this expansive ecology which accompanies humans and spreads where they spread. Terraforming is a well understood art and science, the noble application of ecological principles to the end of maximizing the economic output from comfortable, healthy humans. But what of the "shadow ecology"? What sort of UNintentional ecology has developed on 'Aides out of the cast-offs and strays from human settlement and does this ecology exist parasitically, in parallel, or at cross purposes to the ag-optimizing terraforming ecology?

If no other good can come of this "Lutheria" catastrophe, perhaps some valuable ecological data can be gleaned to aid in the perfection of loyal IDA worlds.

With sincere deference and interest,

Daniel Daughhetee

First and foremost, Daniel, I wish you luck in your most ambitious endeavors. What's more, I truly appreciate your writing in, as evidence that there is much to be learned from the Lutheran example, even among Alliance loyalists and apologists.

Your observation is an astute one. While the specific contents of Old Earth arks have been lost to the ages, the recurrence of non-human genomes across the diaspora indicates that they must have contained living organisms in addition to their human cargo. In the Lutheran context, the most prominent examples are the caprin and ovin comprising Surroko herds, which DNA evidence point to having shared ancestors with other ungulates across the stars.

As for unintended side effects of this non-human colonization, the answer is, sadly: We do not know with any certainty. While it's likely a safe assumption that invasive species have damaged ecosystems across the universe, that damage would have occurred millennia prior to rediscovery, such that existing ecosystems within the human diaspora are a blend of the native and the exotic, raising the question: How many years/centuries/millennia must pass before a lifeform becomes indigenous?

Finally, two other related thoughts to consider, Daniel: First, Alliance colonization priorities are such that thriving and populated planets are always favored over desolate ones, dramatically restricting our knowledge base. Second, the planets settled by humanity were chosen for their suitability, rendering our sample of life-sustaining planets even less representational. As such, I hasten to caution against the frequently held belief that anything seemingly familiar must have shared origins.

Dear Dr. Aldous Foyriushi,

I had a question about the Teomekhean spiritual hierarchy, specifically about the Creator. Both the Orthodox and Reform denominations reference the Creator, but who exactly is the Creator? Are they a vestige of Old Earth? Thanks.

James Coats

You have hit upon a particularly challenging and perplexing topic, James, as the Teomekhean Church closely guards its secrets – inclusive of what it does and does not know – through an esoteric degree system. By way of example, the Teomekhean Church claims continuity with Old Earth religion, that it was ferried across the stars in a Dispersion-era ark, but this can be neither definitively confirmed nor refuted.

What can be confirmed is Teomekhy's view of the Creator as a demiurge, an omniscient, deistic figure who created the universe, its laws and ultimate purpose, but does not involve itself in its operations. Depending on the denomination, it is the Teomekhean adherent's responsibility to either discover (Reform) or merely align one's self with (Orthodox) the Creator's will.

Dear Doctor,

Hope you're well. You're celebrated throughout the universe for your scholarly knowledge of terran interstellar history. Do we know of the first time humans made contact with an alien race?

Thank you,

Mario Botte

You embarrass me, Mario, by praising my knowledge immediately prior to asking a question that I must once again answer with, "I do not know." For starters, the history of Old Earth, the ancestral home of humanity, is wholly lost to us and, as such, any pre-Dispersion contact with alien races is beyond our ken.

Excluding Old Earth incidences, however, humanity's first experience with alien races would have come during the Dispersion. Though, if any of these races possessed something comparable to human sentience, that fact is also unknowable due to the passage of time and the overwhelming tendency for human colonies to undergo cultural and technological regression.

What is most fascinating about your question, however, is that it raises a particularly perplexing point of confusion: What constitutes an alien? Are the Surroko alien? Are the Orourans alien? Are the Surroko? How much time away from our cousins before they become unrecognizable to us? All questions to which I proudly answer "I do not know," in acknowledgement that their asking is more important than their answering.

Bosco, Matt, Daniel, James and Mario: Please accept my heartfelt gratitude not only for your queries but for the thoughtful engagement with and exploration of the FREE PLANET project that must have informed them. As ever, it is my duty and pleasure to continue offering up these questions and clarifications to such an attentive and insightful readership.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Aldous Foyroushi

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NEXT ISSUE

Cover A



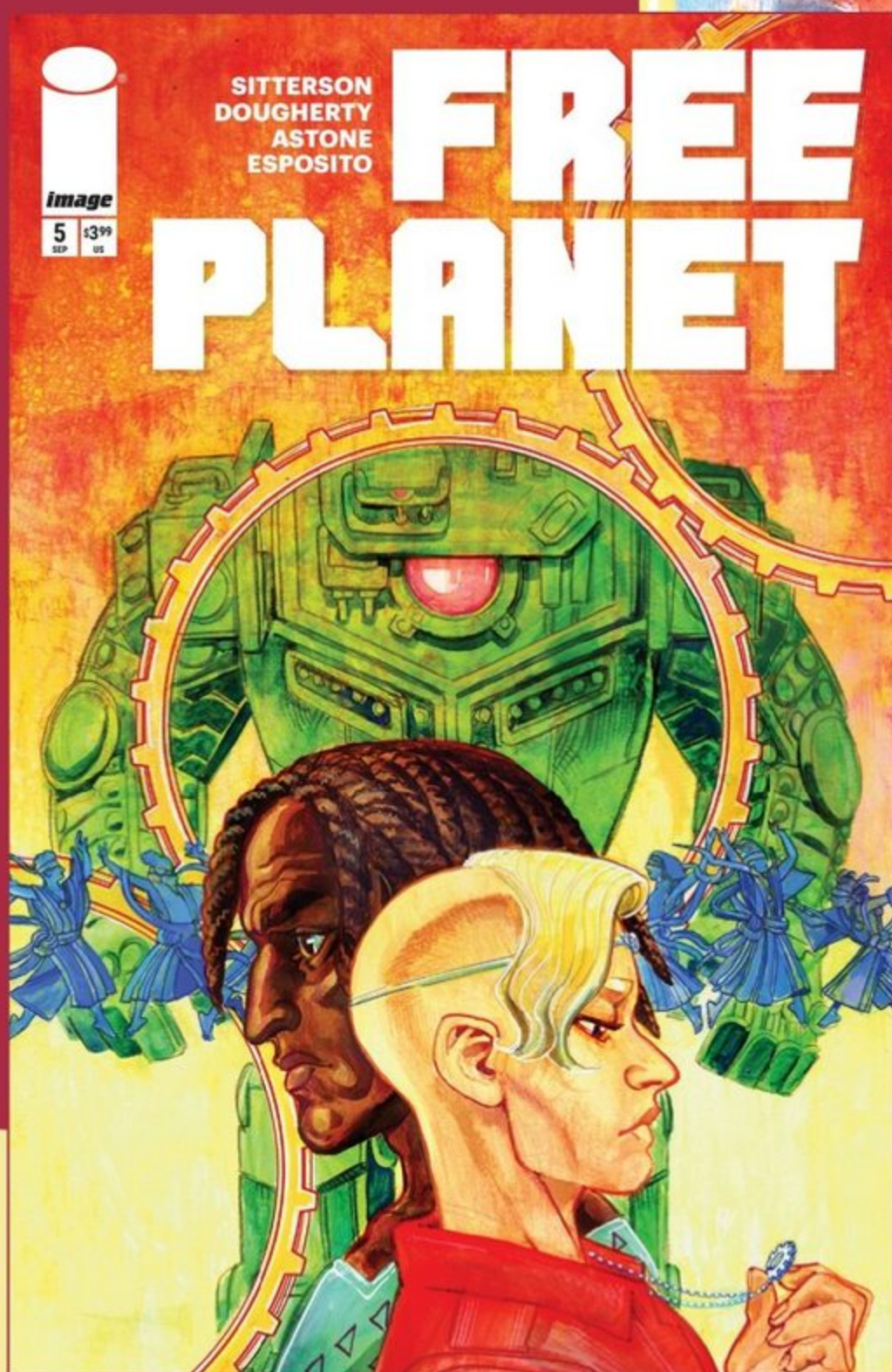
SITTERSON
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ESPOSITO

FREE PLANET NET



*"Peace amid uncertainty,
order from anarchy...this is
the Lutheran dream!"*

Cover B



SPAWN VOID RIVALS GEIGER
RECKLESS EAST OF WEST I KILL GIANTS
THE WALKING DEAD I HATE FAIRYLAND
THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH SEX CRIMINALS
KILLADELPHIA
SAVAGE DRAGON BATTLE CHASERS
THE SACRIFICERS BLACK SCIENCE THE WICKED + THE DIVINE
MONSTRESS CHEW SWEET PAPRIKA
NOCTERRA
MOONSTRUCK UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY REDCOAT BUG WARS
DESCENDER PAPER GIRLS THE OLD GUARD
INVINCIBLE WANTED BITTER ROOT
STRAY DOGS WHAT'S THE FURTHEST PLACE FROM HERE SNOTGIRL
SAGA FERAL WITCHBLADE FRIDAY
CRIMINAL
EIGHT BILLION GENIES
FIRE POWER
GIDEON FALLS DIE
SPECTATORS
LITTLE MONSTERS
RAT QUEENS
RADIANT BLACK
ICE CREAM MAN
DECORUM BITCH PLANET
DEADLY CLASS
WORLDTR33
MIDDLEWEST
WE CALLED THEM GIANTS
LITTLE BIRD



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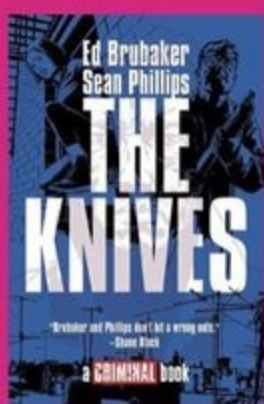
AUGUST AT IMAGE



Escape's animal filter on a slightly fictionalised World War II is sure to lead to easy comparisons, but Rick Remender [*Deadly Class*, *The Seasons*] and Daniel Acuña's [*Captain America*, *Black Panther*] new title is more classic European-period noir *Blacksad* meets classic war movie than *Maus*. Acuña is one of my favourite working artists, and he creates something vividly period in its painterly mood, and Remender hits the themes of families, failings and the fight against fascism. Timely and thrilling.



The Universal Monsters range reaches *The Invisible Man*, with a take on monstrous Professor Griffin. Dani [*The Low, Low Woods*] is another artist I adore - she pushes her style to be less hyper-grindhouse towards a John Paul Leon-stylised minimalism. James Tynion's [*Exquisite Corpses*] sparse narration drills down on perception, being perceived, and puts us inside Griffin's deeply uncomfortable perspective. This makes the potential of the Invisible Man as a story clear to see.



With *Criminal* coming to Amazon, showrun by Ed Brubaker, it's the perfect time for a reminder of where it all came from. Ed and Sean's new *Criminal* volume, *The Knives*, is a story about a comic creator whose book is adapted, and he ends up in a writing room and – wait, Ed, is this meta? Well, no – but it does understand that all Hollywood stories are crime stories. This is scurrilous, playful. *The Knives* is some of the best *Criminal*, and *Criminal* is as good as crime comics get.



I haven't been able to get an advance copy of Mário Freitas and Lucas Pereira's *The Man Who Dreamt The Impossible*, but it sounds fascinating, imagining a timeline where Kirby lived longer. It is – and I quote – “A fictionalized tribute to Jack Kirby, to the men who better took care of his work, and to others who suffered the same creative and editorial constraints throughout their careers.”



Talking about Kirby's influence, the lysergic-toybox that is Tom Scoli has a whole trade of new stuff out. He's been delighting me since *Godlands*, and while his most recent work has been [excellent] licensed material, this volume [and I think this one deserves all caps] **SPACE OPERA XANADAX ACROSS THE UNKNOWN DIMENSIONS OF THE GALAXY** is a welcome return to his own berserk self. Heroic, anti-heroic and plain villainous space-opera converge in bursts of comic power. Strong!

Kieron Gillen writes *The Power Fantasy*.



“This is the entirety of our duty: Protect
Lutheria by any means necessary”

—*Gloria Sunandez*

